

School Safety for Educators

Students learn and do their best work when they feel safe, respected, and welcome in school.ⁱ Helping students feel safe includes promoting their physical and emotional well-being and ensuring they have a positive relationship with trusted adults in school.ⁱⁱ Helping students feel respected and welcome means actively reaching out, as well as valuing their perspectives and cultural backgrounds.ⁱⁱⁱ It also means making an intentional effort to protect them from bullying and other harmful behaviors.^{iv}

In 2017, more than 1 in 5 students ages 12–18 reported being bullied in school.^v



In 2016, more than 1 in 3 students said they were bullied online.^{vi}



According to an April 2010 national study,^{vii} school staff members witnessed bullying:

at least once in the last month



86%

two or more times in the last month



61%

once a week or more.



40%

HOW TO ESTABLISH SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS^{viii}

- 1 Maintain a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative statements with each student.
- 2 Set and teach behavioral expectations that value students' cultural diversity.
- 3 Teach and model social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, such as perspective-taking, empathy, and active listening.
- 4 Intervene early when students begin to show academic, behavioral, or social difficulties.
- 5 Encourage students to share any safety concerns—even if it is simply a feeling that "something is not right."
- 6 Teach students and families how to prevent and respond to bullying and unsafe situations.

WHAT TO DO IF STUDENTS SHARE SAFETY CONCERN^{ix}

- 1 Take each school safety concern seriously and protect students' confidentiality.
- 2 Use empathy and active listening to learn about the students' perspective and concerns.
- 3 Use a nonjudgmental, solution-focused approach to learn the facts about the unsafe situation.
- 4 Protect students' physical, emotional, and/or psychological well-being.
- 5 Report each concern to the administrator or team responsible for school safety.
- 6 Seek help if you are having difficulty supporting an individual student or a group of students.

Additional information about school safety

National School Safety Center <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/resources/national-school-safety-center>

National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/>

OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports <https://www.pbis.org/>

Cyberbullying Research Center <https://cyberbullying.org/>

RESOURCES

ⁱ Côté-Lussier, C., & Fitzpatrick, C. (2019). Feelings of safety at school, socioemotional functioning, and classroom engagement. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 58(5), 543–550; Lacoé, J. (2016). Too scared to learn? The academic consequences of feeling unsafe in the classroom. *Urban Education*, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED556783>

ⁱⁱ Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2017). A Research Synthesis of the Associations Between Socioeconomic Background, Inequality, School Climate, and Academic Achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(2), 425-469. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1133356>; Gregory, A., Cornell, D., Fan, X., Sheras, P., Shih, T., & Huang, F. (2010). Authoritative school discipline: High school practices associated with lower student bullying and victimization. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102, 483–496.

ⁱⁱⁱ Crosnoe, R., Johnson, M. K., & Elder, G. H., Jr. (2004). Intergenerational bonding in school: The behavioral and contextual correlates of student-teacher relationships. *Sociology of Education*, 77(1), 60–81. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ695992>

^{iv} Federal Commission on School Safety. (2018). Final report of the federal commission on school safety. Retrieved on December 2, 2019 from <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/school-safety/school-safety-report.pdf>

^v National Center for Educational Statistics. (2019). Student reports of bullying and cyberbullying: Results from the 2017 school crime supplement to the National Victimization Survey. US Department of Education. Retrieved December 10, 2019 from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019054.pdf>

^{vi} Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. (2019). *Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, & Response* (2019 edition). Cyberbullying Research Center. Retrieved from <https://cyberbullying.org/Cyberbullying-Identification-Prevention-Response-2019.pdf>

^{vii} Bradshaw, C. P., Waasdorp, T. E., O'Brennan, L. M., Gulemetova, M., & Henderson, r. (2011). National Education Association's Nationwide Study of Bullying: Teachers' and Education Support Professionals' Perspectives. Washington DC: National Education Association. Retrieved December 9, 2019 from https://www.nea.org/assets/docs/2010_Survey.pdf

^{viii} Farrington, D. P., & Tofti, M. M. (2019). Examining the effectiveness of school-bullying programs globally: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 1(1), 14–31; Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. (2019). *Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, & Response* (2019 edition). Cyberbullying Research Center. Retrieved from <https://cyberbullying.org/Cyberbullying-Identification-Prevention-Response-2019.pdf>

^{xi} *ibid*